

The difference between design and research

Because of the circumstances in which they encounter it, children tend to misunderstand wealth. They confuse it with money. They think that there is a fixed amount of it. And they think of it as something that's distributed by authorities (and so should be distributed equally), rather than something that has to be created (and might be created unequally).

The difference between design and research seems to be a question of new versus good. Design doesn't have to be new, but it has to be good. Research doesn't have to be good, but it has to be new. I think these two paths converge at the top: the best design surpasses its predecessors by using new ideas, and the best research solves problems that are not only new, but actually worth solving. So ultimately we're aiming for the same destination, just approaching it from different directions. Design begins by asking, who is this for and what do they need from it?

A good architect, for example, does not begin by creating a design that he then imposes on the users, but by studying the intended users and figuring out what they need, not "what they want." This may vary from field to field in the arts, but I don't think there is any field in which the best work is done by the people who just make exactly what the customers tell them to. It's hard to design something for an unsophisticated user. It's hard to stay interested in something you don't like yourself.

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